

8 Jefferson County Leader

NEWS

Thursday, April 24, 2003

3 years, \$250,000 dedicated to study ALS, MS in Jefferson County

By Peggy Scott
For the Leader

A three-year study is attempting to discover if Jefferson County has a higher-than-expected number of multiple sclerosis and Lou Gehrig's disease cases.

Data collection for the study is expected to begin in late April or early May, following approval of a \$250,000 federal grant from the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. The study is being conducted by the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services.

Jefferson County is one of five locations in the nation selected for the study to determine the prevalence of MS and Lou Gehrig's disease, also known as amyotrophic lateral sclerosis or ALS, in communities around hazardous waste sites. Other sites are in Illinois, Oregon, Massachusetts and Texas.

Dr. Joseph Malone, from the Atlanta-based Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is working with Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services and will coordinate the Jefferson County study.

This is the first large-scale study to see if an

association exists between multiple sclerosis and Lou Gehrig's disease and hazardous waste materials.

Dr. Joseph Malone,
coordinator of the study

He said Jefferson County was selected in part because the county has two hazardous materials locations. Lead contamination is being monitored in Herculanum and chemical solvents associated with radioactive waste are being monitored at Hematite.

"What we're going to do is measure the prevalence of multiple sclerosis and amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS)," Malone said.

Malone said the prevalence of Lou Gehrig's disease nationally is about six per 100,000. The prevalence of multiple sclerosis nationally is 150 per 100,000. Prevalence is the number of cases at any given time.

The local study will count people who

lived in Jefferson County between 1998 and 2002 and were treated for or were diagnosed with either Lou Gehrig's disease or MS during that time.

Both Lou Gehrig's disease and multiple sclerosis are neurological disorders that attack nerve cells.

Questions about health risks have been raised consistently in both Herculanum and Hematite as cleanup plans have been discussed. At public meetings, residents have reported what they felt were higher than normal rates of cancer, Lou Gehrig's disease and multiple sclerosis.

However, Malone said, anecdotal studies don't make statistical sense. "There are too many confusing aspects to determine if a true association exists," he said.

This is the first large-scale study to see if an association exists between the diseases and hazardous waste materials.

Malone said some smaller studies have indicated a link may exist. "But it is not an established fact," he said.

Malone said the study will look at the entire county instead of either specific community. "We have to have a large enough area to make some sense out of the statistics and put them in context," he said.

The state will attempt to count the cases starting with the ALS and multiple sclerosis associations. Neurologists, hospitals and clinics are invited to report cases. And people are asked to contact the Jefferson County Health Department if they lived in the county during those years and have either of the conditions.

In addition, researchers will be combing through public health records already compiled by the state, for example, Medicare forms.

The study won't count people who were treated or died of the diseases prior to 1998. Call the county Health Department at 789-3372 or the state Health Department at 573-751-6128.

Site: Herculanum
ID# MOD006246373
Break: 2.0
Other: 4-24-03

40174798



SUPERFUND RECORDS

7ES

A717

FROM: 6364753946

P05

04-28-03 12:18 TO:

Thursday, April 24, 2003

NEWS Jefferson County Leader 9

Study shows improvements in lead levels

A new study of blood lead levels in Herculanum shows a 50 percent decrease in the number of children under age 6 who have elevated blood lead levels compared to a year earlier.

State health officials say the data shows efforts may be working to clean up lead contamination in Herculanum from Doe Run, the nation's largest lead smelter. The lead smelter has been in operation in Herculanum for 100 years.

In 2002, 14 percent of Herculanum children tested had elevated blood lead levels compared with 28 percent of the children tested in 2001, a drop of 50 percent.

Children tested who live closest to the smelter (east of Hwy. 61-67) showed a 62 percent decrease in the prevalence of elevated blood lead levels. In 2002, 17 percent of children tested had elevated blood lead levels, compared to 45 percent of those tested in 2001.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines elevated blood lead levels in children less than 6 years of age as levels at or above 10 micrograms of lead per deciliter of blood (mg/dL).

The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS), in cooperation with the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), released the results of blood lead testing conducted in 2002 on residents of Herculanum. Similar tests were done in 2001 in hopes of tracking Herculanum residents, who are at higher risk for blood lead poisoning because of the Herculanum lead smelter facility.

Rachelle Kuster, an environmental specialist with the state, said the numbers show definite improvement.

"The data indicates there was less lead exposure in 2002 than in 2001," Kuster said. "Conditions are improving in Herculanum, but there is still additional work that needs to be done."

Kuster said several factors could be responsible for the apparent reduction in blood lead levels in children living in Her-

culaneum.

The Missouri Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency have required Doe Run to eliminate or reduce the sources of lead contamination.

Health agencies have increased lead-level testing for childhood, increased education of lead poisoning and provided information on reducing exposures, especially for children.

In addition, some of the children in the area most at risk to lead exposure from the smelter no longer reside in that area due to property buyouts. This also may have contributed to the reduction in elevated blood lead prevalence in 2002.

Kuster said families in Herculanum should continue to monitor blood lead levels of their children and should continue cleaning, good nutrition and other practices aimed at curbing lead exposure.

"We will still continue to be involved in the community," she said. "We will provide health education materials and try to keep awareness high."

The state reported other details about blood testing in Herculanum.

- Three hundred forty people were tested in 2002 (64 percent fewer than in 2001, when 935 were tested): 58 children less than 6 years of age, 129 children between the ages of 6 and 17 years, and 153 adults age 18 years or older. Eight (14%) of the 58 children less than 6 years of age had elevated blood lead levels. Blood lead levels for children less than 6 years of age ranged from 2 to 28 mg/dL. Although fewer persons were tested in 2002 than in 2001, the data seem to indicate that less lead exposure occurred in 2002 than in 2001.

- In 2002, two (1.5%) of 129 children between the ages of 6 and 17 years had blood lead levels above 10 mg/dL. Blood lead levels for children in this age group ranged from 2 to 14 mg/dL. A comparison of data from 2002 to data from 2001 shows an 81% reduction in the number of elevated blood lead levels

for children in this age group.

- Of 153 adults tested in 2002, six had blood lead levels above 25 mg/dL. Blood lead levels for adults tested ranged from 1 to 42 mg/dL. CDC defines elevated blood lead levels in adults as levels at or above 25 mg/dL.

DHSS is working with ATSDR to review the 2002 blood lead data and publish a formal written document called a health consultation. The health consultation will include a summary of the data, the department's conclusions based on the review of the data, and a statement of recommendations. The health consultation will be presented to the community at a future Community Advisory Group meeting.

Barb Shepherd, spokeswoman for the Doe Run Co., said she had read the news release about the study but hadn't seen the full report.

"We're pleased that the Department of Health and Senior Services has provided this information and we're looking forward to reading the full report," Shepherd said. "At this point, without having read the report, we can't really comment."

She said Doe Run will continue with residential soil replacements and interior cleaning of Herculanum homes. Phase 2 of a home purchase program is also under way. At the plant, several small construction projects are being completed to contain lead dust, she said. "We are closing up parts of the building," she said.